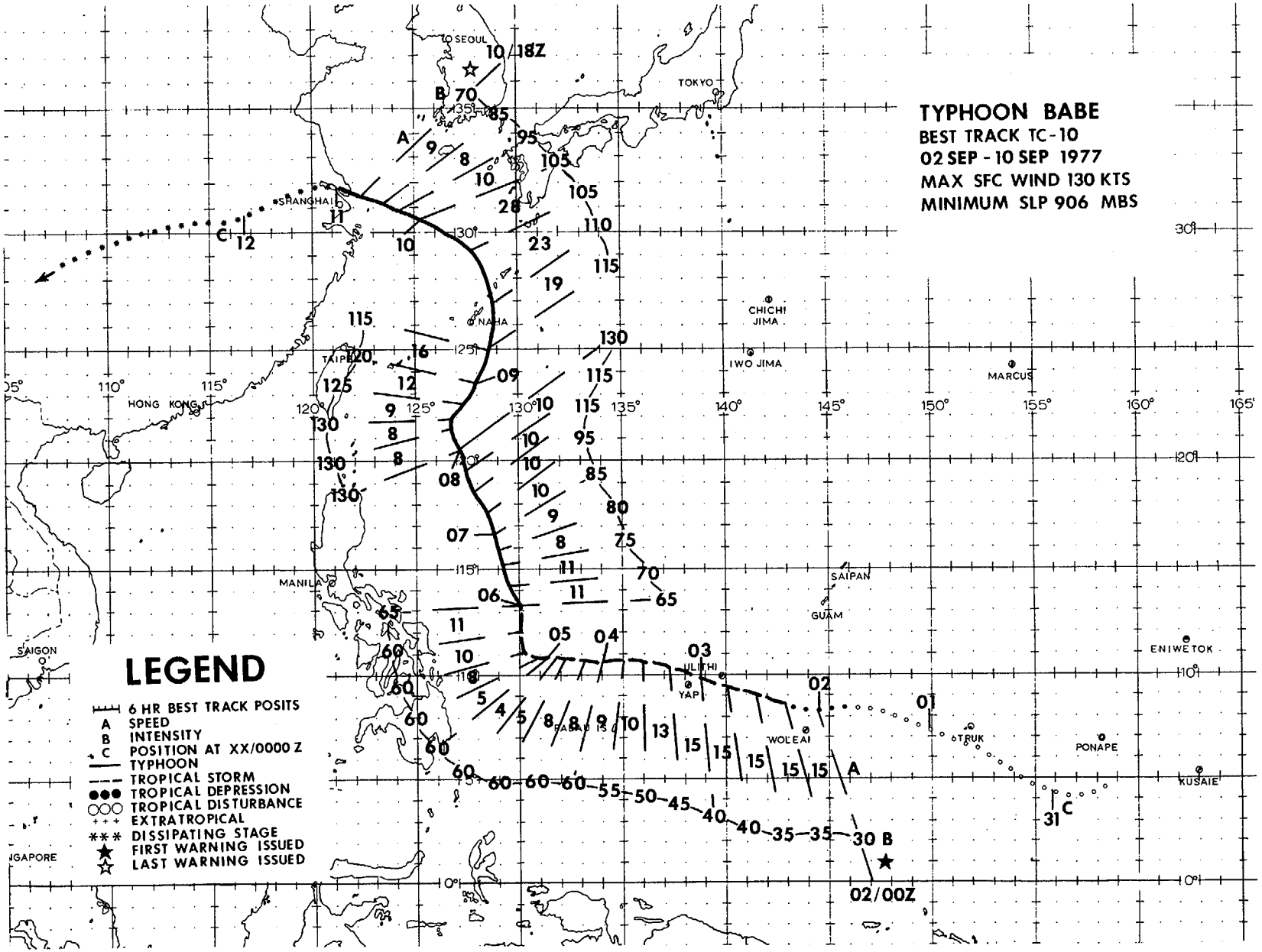
TYPHOON BABE
BEST TRACK TC-10
02 SEP - 10 SEP 1977
MAX SFC WIND 130 KTS
MINIMUM SLP 906 MBS
LEGEND
6 HR BEST TRACK POSITS
A SPEED
B INTENSITY
C POSITION AT XX/0000 Z
TYPHOON
TROPICAL STORM
TROPICAL DEPRESSION
TROPICAL DISTURBANCE
EXTRATROPICAL
DISSIPATING STAGE
FIRST WARNING ISSUED
LAST WARNING ISSUED
10/18Z
02/00Z
SEOUL
TOKYO
SHANGHAI
NAHA
TAIPEI
HONG KONG
MANILA
SAIGON
CHICHI JIMA
IWO JIMA
MARCUS
SAIPAN
GUAM
ENIWETOK
ULITHI
YAP
WOLEAI
TRUK
PONAPE
KUSAIE

During August 1977, no typhoons were observed. The JTWC significant Tropical Weather Advisory of 31 August stated, "the probability is that the remainder of 1977 should see an increase in typhoon activity". The next day, 1 September, the seedling of the year's 10th tropical cyclone and the only super typhoon was first observed. Babe was a very challenging storm in that during her lifetime she threatened virtually every major DoD facility in the western North Pacific.

Satellite data on the 1st at 0143Z and 0000Z synoptic data indicated a weak surface circulation with associated convection near 7N-150E. Based on this data, a Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert was issued. At this time, there was a tropical upper tropospheric trough (TUTT) present at 200 mb to the North of the alert area. The TUTT maintained its position through the 3rd at 0000Z and the divergence on the southern side of the TUTT aided in the development of the seedling into Tropical Depression 10 (TD 10).

The first warning on TD 10 was issued on the 2nd at 0000Z. An aircraft fix on the 2nd at 0052Z estimated the maximum surface wind to be 40 kt (21 m/sec). On the following warning (0600Z), TD 10 was upgraded to Tropical Storm Babe. With the TUTT circulation providing fair outflow conditions aloft, Babe slowly intensified as she moved westward across the warm Philippine Sea. Babe was being steered at this time by a well developed mid-tropospheric subtropical ridge which extended from the dateline into central China. With this westward movement expected to continue, Babe was forecast to cross the Republic of the Philippines and pose a threat to Subic Bay and Clark AB. The westward movement continued until the 5th at 0000Z when signs of a change in direction of movement first appeared. Between the 2nd and the 4th, Babe had an average speed of 14 kt (25 km/hr). By the 4th at 1200Z, the speed had dropped to 8 kt (14 km/hr), further dropping to 5 kt (9 km/hr) in the following 12 hours.

On the 5th at 0000Z, an upper air trough in the mid-latitude westerlies appeared over northeastern Asia. A weakness in the subtropical ridge between the trough and Babe became evident and increased the probability of a more northerly storm track. A change in Babe's direction of movement was first noted by satellite data at 052155Z (Fig. 4-9) and confirmed by aircraft reconnaissance at 052243Z.

Taiwan, which was still recovering from the effects of earlier typhoons, Thelma and Vera, was now threatened again. Aircraft data between the 5th at 0832Z and the 7th at 2204Z showed Babe to have undergone rapid deepening with the central pressure dropping from 988 mb to 907 mb, a rate of 1.3 mb/hr. This rapid deepening was in response to the divergent southwesterly flow ahead of the strong upper air trough now stretching from east of Japan into central Taiwan, which provided a strong outflow channel aloft. Babe was upgraded to a typhoon on the 6th at 0000Z and a super typhoon on the 8th at 0000Z (Fig. 4-10).

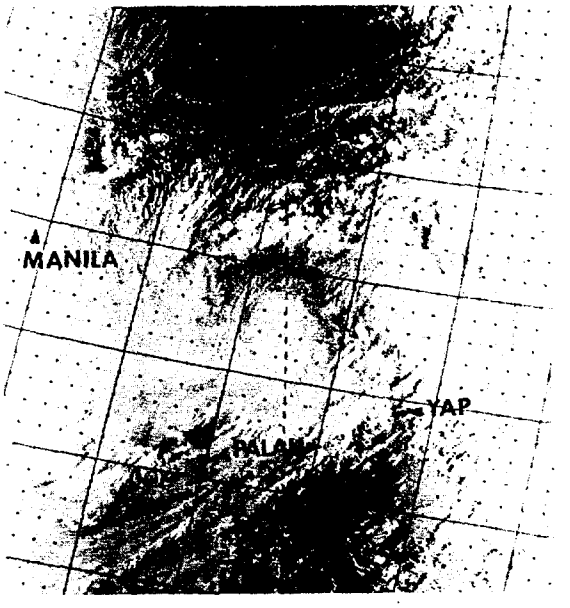

FIGURE 4-9. Babe at minimal typhoon strength and heading northward, 5 September 1977, 2155Z. (DMSP imagery)

FIGURE 4-10. Super Typhoon Babe at 130 kt (67 m/sec) intensity 250 nm (463 km) southeast of Ishigaki Jima, 8 September 1977, 0303Z. (DMSP imagery)

Up until the 080000Z warning, Babe was still forecast to cross Taiwan and then dissipate in mainland China prior to full recurvature. On the 7th at 1200Z, however, another upper air trough moved into northern China. This short wave additionally weakened the mid-tropospheric ridge over southeastern China. A low soon developed in this trough over Korea indicating the trough would move slowly and possibly deepen. This increased the probability that Babe would recurve much earlier than expected. This came to pass and as Taiwan was relieved, Okinawa and Japan now faced the fury of Babe. Aircraft and radar data showed Babe began recurvature to the northeast after the 8th at 0600Z and while weakening at a rate of 5 kt/6 hr (2.5 m/sec). Conditions of readiness were set for southern Japan and aircraft evacuated Kadena AB for appropriate "safe haven" locations (Fig. 4-11).

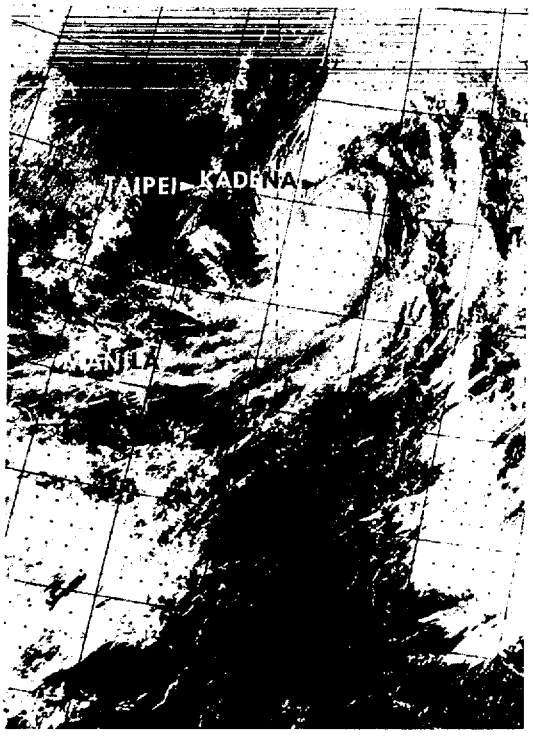

FIGURE 4-11. Typhoon Babe at 120 kt (62 m/sec) intensity, slowly weakening and accelerating northward, 9 September 1977, 0245Z. (DMSP imagery)

During Babe's north-northeastward transit, the upper air low which had formed over Korea moved south-southwestward, deepened and cut-off from the main upper air trough. This allowed ridging to the east and northeast of Babe to build east-west to the north of Babe and the cut-off low steering Babe toward Korea, and eventually Shanghai. Evidence of a Fujiwhara type effect between Babe's circulation and the cut-off low also appeared. Babe finally steered around the northern periphery of the cut-off low and hit the People's Republic of China just north of Shanghai on the 11th at 0000Z with surface winds of 65 kt (33 m/sec) (Fig. 4-12).

The greatest damage from super typhoon Babe occurred after she recurved and headed for Japan. Newspaper reports described Babe as "the worst typhoon to threaten Japan in 18 years". Babe struck the Japanese island of Okino-Erabu with winds of 135 kts (69 m/sec) injuring 45 people and destroying 1600 homes. Kadena AB recorded maximum sustained winds of 36 kt (19 m/sec) on the 9th and a peak gust of 60 kt (31 m/sec) at 091328Z. Babe also disrupted maritime activities sinking a Panamanian freighter with 16 reported dead or missing and damaging approximately 100 Japanese fishing vessels which sought safety in the East China Sea.

The overall forecast accuracy for super typhoon Babe was below average. However, the DoD operational impact was decreased by the use of forecast confidence probabilities appended to JTWC prognostic discussion bulletins and the many telephone conversations between JTWC and WESTPAC staff meteorologists. This was confirmed by operations staff personnel at the 1978 Tropical Cyclone Conference.

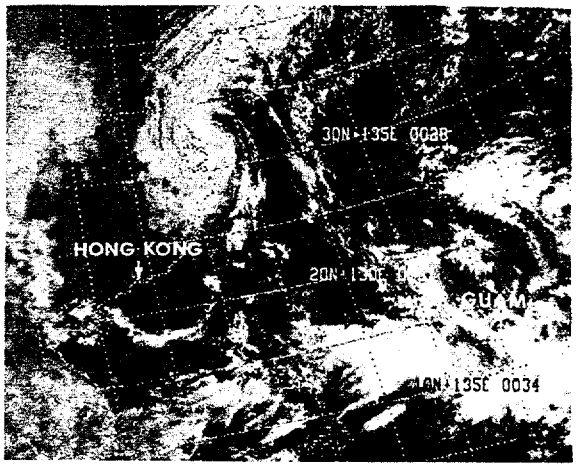

FIGURE 4-12. Typhoon Babe during landfall 60 nm (111 km) north of Shanghai, People's Republic of China, 11 September 1977, 0109Z. The monsoon trough extending from the Philippine to the Mariana Islands would soon spawn the next typhoon, Dinah. (NOAA-5 imagery from FLEWEAFAC Suitland, MD)